

Let's open our bibles this morning to the book of Hebrews, we pick back up in the 11th chapter of the book. Our text is Hebrews 11:7-10 (repeat). As David mentioned last week we are working our way through what may be the most familiar portion of the book of Hebrews. Maybe you've heard the idiom, "familiarity breeds contempt" which essentially means the more familiar you become with something leads to a loss of respect. That isn't always the case with everything, however when it comes to familiar Bible passages you and I must be vigilant to guard against tuning out and turning off.

And I want to pull two of David's observations from last week back before us because they are fundamental as we move through this chapter. First, if you remember, David showed us that faith in the Bible is not a feeling, but a certain conviction. "Faith is not a sanctified hoping for the best." Faith is a confident certainty based on real facts. Christian faith is based in reality, not fantasy.

The second observation I want us to be reminded of is this, your faith reveals your confidence. Basically, wherever your faith finds its resting place reveals what you are confident in. Everyone acts on faith at any moment. You grab an umbrella because you have a faith in your weather app. You constantly check your phone because you have faith that it will give you what you need. You frequent social media because you have faith it keeps you connected to others and "in the know." All of us live by faith in someone or something at every moment, and our actions reveal where our confidence lies. If you neglect your Bible reading you demonstrate your faith in your own wisdom. When you neglect prayer you demonstrate your confidence in yourself. What we do reveals what we believe.

And as we saw last week, the wrong way to read Hebrews 11 is to look for heroes in the historical names and events. Hebrews 11 has only one hero, the Lord Jesus Christ, the hope and treasure of his people. God is the champion of Hebrews 11 as he works through his children to bring Himself glory by saving His people.

And just to remind ourselves of the context, chapter 10 ended with the author exhorting his readers to hold on to their faith in the midst of great struggle, and ch. 11 is Him packing proof into their heart to build their confidence in the God who saved them. Just let your eyes drift up to the end of ch. 10, particularly vs. *"³² But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, ³³ sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. ³⁴ For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. ³⁵ Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. ³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised."*¹ Then vs. 39, *"³⁹ But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls."*²

So the author launches into this prolonged list of examples to remind his readers, that their faith had brought them into a company of saints that long preceded them. This is not merely a historical review

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 10:32–36.

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 10:39.

for Jewish Christians, but an assault on their doubts with the faithfulness of God to his people. These were not unknown stories to the first hearers, but the application of these stories to them as they suffered and labored to follow Jesus was meant to pack their hearts full of firewood for the Holy Spirit to set ablaze with fresh passion to trust Jesus, so let's look at our text this morning Hebrews 11:7-10.

⁷ By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

⁸ By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.

¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.”³

This is the Word of the Lord... Thanks be to God!

Sherlock Holmes fascinates me as a literary character. In fact, to my wife's chagrin I have multiple copies of the same Sherlock Holmes stories. I'm not obsessed, but I am a bit taken by the character, and I don't mean the tv shows or movies, some are good, but he leaps off the page of the tales Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote. There are many things that make Sherlock a singularly unique character, but the most astonishing one to everyone else is his ability to see. In each of the tales Sherlock sees what others cannot, but it's not because his eyesight is better than anyone else's in the room, but rather that his attention to detail, and his ability to see things exactly as they truly are, when others cannot. To read Sherlock working out a mystery is a lesson in what he frequently calls simply "observation" – what leaves other detectives, and even his closest companion Watson, so flabbergasted is how obvious crimes are to Sherlock and how obscure the same crimes are to the professional detectives. Yet, when Sherlock explains how he came to his conclusions, it seems so obvious to everyone around – and he likes to make sport of how everyone else is so dumb for not seeing the solution. But many times, when I have read the tales of Sherlock I too have thought...looking back of course that's what happened, it was so obvious, but like the dumb detectives and Watson I have to admit, I couldn't see what was right in front of me.

In a similar way the Jewish Christians who were tempted to return to the Old Covenant practices were blind to what was right in front of them in their own history. They had a sight problem, and so these verses draw out what Noah and Abraham saw by faith, that others could not. Because they, as we read in vs. 6, drew near to God believing that He exists and rewards those who seek Him. And as we look at these two examples, we see that it was God who is the provider of what they could not see with their human eyes, because He had given them the eyes of faith.

So we'll explore these examples using two statements:

See God's judgment that you may live by faith.

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 11:6–10.

In vs. 7 Noah is put forth as an example of one who acted in faith, but what did he act upon. The author here tells us that He acted on the Word of God, right? *7 By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household.* Why did Noah build an ark? Because God warned him that judgment was coming upon the earth. Maybe you remember this story from your childrens Sunday school lessons, but we could do with a refresher from Genesis 6, listen as I read from Genesis:

“5 The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. 7 So the LORD said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.” 8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD... 11 Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence. 12 And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. 13 And God said to Noah, “I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth. 14 Make yourself an ark of gopher wood... 17 For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die. 18 But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you.”⁴

God in grace and mercy warned Noah, and Noah heard the warning and acted on the promise God made about the world and about Noah. This is a praiseworthy action of Noah, but Noah is not a praiseworthy man. Yes we see that Noah was a righteous man, why? Because he walked with God, but if you no anything of the rest of the story Noah is a flawed man whose sinful overindulgence costs him and his family dearly. But what Noah did right was believe what God told Him, so much so that the faith He placed in God was demonstrated by doing something crazy in the sight of the world.

The author of Hebrews highlights this notion by using the word unseen. It was not as if he could visibly see the flood, the destruction of the world, or even what on earth building a gigantic ark would do. But let me point you to what, I think he did see. Did you hear how God saw all that was happening in the world?

- *Genesis 6:11 - 11 Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence.* – We are told what God sees, even into the intentions of the hearts of humanity, but here he makes a statement of evidence – the corruption of humanity was displayed in violence. Literally the word violence in that verse refers to acts of violence.
- Now for Noah this was a testable claim. Meaning Noah could look at the world and see if reality was consistent with what God said, and apparently it was. In fact, if God spoke to us and said I am going to judge the earth because people are wicked and commit acts of violence upon each other. We would be wise to take him at his word because the violence of the world would prove

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 6:5–18.

the truthfulness of God. And can we not admit that this world is a violent place? Could we not agree with God that even now the world is filled with violence.

So Noah hears the warning of God, sees the proof in the world that verifies the reason for the coming judgment and then has to invest a significant amount of his time and resources to constructing a means of salvation according to God's design. Day after day, cutting, fastening, and securing materials building a boat. Each day he had to work hard believing that God was not a liar that He was true and that He would keep his Word. That he would judge the world and that He would save Noah and his family. With splintered and blistered hands day by day with every tool he used his actions said, I trust you Yahweh, You are my God and my hope is in you.

And the author of Hebrews shows us the heart motivation behind the daily actions of Noah, there in the second half of vs. 7, "*in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household*"⁵ – Noah had a reverent fear of the Lord. Why? Because he walked with God, he knew that he was the creation and not the Creator and that the one who made Him was worthy of reverent fear. It should be no surprise that thousands of years later Solomon would make the famous statement in Proverbs 1:7, "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.*"⁶ Noah did not construct the ark in hiding. From all accounts Noah simply started building the Ark on land. Can you imagine how he must've appeared to the people around him? Yet Noah feared the Lord more than he cared about the opinion of man.

Because of his fear of the Lord and His faith in God his actions proved wise and the fools who despised the warning right in front of them bore the deserved punishment for their sins. This is the effect of Noah's faithfulness, Noah's belief in God and the people who were indifferent to his boast shaped warning of judgment, who were wicked and committed to violence, whose hearts were desperately wicked and utterly corrupt – they were condemned by Noah's faith. Look at the next phrase in vs.7, "*By this he condemned the world*"⁷

What does that mean, how does that work? Well Noah's faith was a witness to the holiness and justice of God, the ark was a testimony to the fact that the Lord saves those who place their trust in Him, and judges everyone who persists in sin and unrepentance. Sinners who deny wickedness and do not concern themselves with their guilt before God are doomed not only by their own actions, but their indifference to God's mercy.

And church the sad reality is that none who saw Noah and his family building the ark paid any mind to what he was doing, they were content to live as they were oblivious to the judgment that was coming. You know fisher price isn't our friend when it comes to bible stories. We see plastic figures of smiling Noah and his family, animals happily looking out of the toy boats windows. You know I have never seen a toy set that also included screaming people who are drowning, or lifeless waterlogged corpses. None of the toys came with a sound button you could hear of people pounding on the sides of

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 11:7.

⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Pr 1:7.

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 11:7.

the boat to be let in to escape the deluge wrath of God. Are we guilty of removing all of the horror from the wrath of God with our children? Have we painted a casual picture of his holiness as if His judgment isn't so bad? If God's judgement isn't so bad then why was the cross so bloody? Why was Jesus marred beyond recognition? Why was our innocent Lord nailed mercilessly to a tree that he upheld by his own power according to Hebrews 1?

Oh friend it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. If you are here and you are not a Christian, know this God will judge sin, and the judgment will not be by comparison to other sinners, but according to His perfection. I take no delight in this warning, but I am pleading with you to place your faith in the God who saves. Do not trust yourself, that is what the people of Noah did who realized as water filled their lungs and they drowned they could not save themselves from God's wrath. And neither can any of us. In reality, even Noah did not save himself, he trusted the Lord and God delivered Noah and his family – God didn't have to warn him, God didn't have to give him plans for a boat but God did. He gave Noah a warning and Noah believed, and we see the reward of his faith, in the last phrase of vs. 7, “*and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.*”⁸ Ultimately Noah would actually prove to be an unrighteous person, just like you and just like me. But just like you and me he received a righteousness not His own by faith...Like you and I, Noah needed to be made righteous by a means other than his good works, and the author of Hebrews connects the dots for us by showing us that through his faith in God he received righteousness.” Noah received an inheritance from God (that's family language)...why? Because he was righteous? Because he built a big boat and managed a floating zoo? No, Noah received the inheritance of righteousness because he trusted in His heavenly Father even when he couldn't see with his eyes what was coming. Noah lived by faith and not by sight...and the Lord credited righteousness that was not his own to Him.

This is the hope we hold out for every sinner, not that you can earn salvation from God, you can't. The gospel shows you that you don't have to, for the wrath sinners deserved was poured out upon another in our place. You see if you're not a Christian here today, this is what we want you to hear. God is righteous and holy, he will judge sin. Sin is any through word or action that is contrary to his perfection. And because we are guilty before God we stand as His enemies and yet the Scriptures say, “*God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.*”⁹ God loved us and gave Jesus for us to save us from His own wrath, but what is more is that we also are justified by the blood of Christ. To be justified is to be declared right, as the late Tim Keller said, a Christian can say “I am justified, it's just as if I'd never sinned” – this is the treasure of the gospel – Jesus takes our guilt and judgment upon himself, and we receive his perfect righteousness – we receive this good news by repenting of our sin and trusting in Jesus. You can do that today, and if you have questions about what it means to repent and believe in Jesus, you can see me or any of the pastors or leaders down front and we'd love to help you understand what it means to become a Christian.

⁸ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 11:7.

⁹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 5:8–9.

And I would urge you if that is you to not delay in turning to Christ, because the judgment of God in a more final way is still to come listen to what Peter wrote in 2 Peter... *“⁸ But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.”¹⁰*

The people of Noah’s day lived as if nothing would happen, the people of Israel taunted the Lord with their sin expecting nothing would happen, as do many in our day living indifferent to the fact that the day of the Lord is coming and if you wait till that day, it will be too late. Hear the grace and mercy of God in his warning, see the judgment that is coming and by faith lay hold of Jesus and be saved from the wrath of God.

If you are a Christian see the judgment of God and live by faith. Do you live in reverent fear of God, obedient to His Word listening day by day to Him by studying the Scriptures? Will you warn your family, friends, neighbors and coworkers of the wrath that is to come and tell them of the glorious hope that is found in Christ? Will your life look different from the world around you such that you are ready and waiting for the return of Christ?

In 2 Peter we also read how we ought to live by faith as we see the coming judgment of God, Peter writes, *“¹¹ Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness,¹² waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!¹³ But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”¹¹*

By faith we see a better place for us because in Christ we have been made righteous and we have been given a better promise, which is what the author turns to with his next example, our second statement...

Seeing God’s promise that you may live by faith.

The second example we seek is Abraham, who we are told like Noah obeyed by faith. Note the parallels here:

Noah was warned by God, Abraham was called by God
Noah built the ark, Abraham left everything he knew to go where God would send him.
Noah could not see the flood coming, Abraham did not know where he was to go.

¹⁰ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 2 Pe 3:8–10.

¹¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 2 Pe 3:11–13.

Both of these men oriented their lives not around what they could see or what they could forecast, or what they thought would be the best circumstances for their lives, no in both cases they reoriented their lives around the Word God had spoken to them.

For Noah it was a word of judgment, that wrath was coming, for Abraham it was a promise that God would give Him a home. We read this in Genesis 12:1-7, “**12** Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”⁴ So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. ⁵ And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother’s son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, ⁶ Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. ⁷ Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.”¹²

Though there are parallels to Noah, Abraham is different. Noah could see the wickedness and violence of the world around him and, in fact, we see that Noah walked with God, he worshiped God – on the other hand with Abraham we have no indication that he worshiped God and if we had time we would see that he was actually a pagan idolater. Apparently with Abraham God came to call the unrighteous to himself..

And look at what is stacked against him, he doesn’t know where he is going, he is just to go trusting the Lord to guide, furthermore he’s 75 and childless and the Lord is promising a great nation. So he is promised to be the father of a people and to possess a land, neither of which he can see. He can’t see his children or hear them playing all he can see is his wife Sarai and the sadness that came with having no descendant. He couldn’t see this land that he would possess, and he didn’t even have a map to get there – all he had to go on was God’s word – and for Abraham like Noah the Word of God was sufficiently powerful to change the direction of their lives when they trusted Him and lived by faith.

The author of Hebrews says in vs. 8 that the Lord called and Abraham obeyed. He believe God’s Word and acted upon God’s promise. My favorite puritan Thomas Watson explains this aspect of faith like this, “*Faith melts our will into God’s. It runs at God’s call. If God commands duty faith obeys. Faith is not an idle grace; it has an eye to see Christ, so it has a hand to work for him. It not only believes God’s promise, but obeys his command.*”¹³

Abraham’s response of faith was to believe God’s Word so deeply that he oriented his life around the promises of God such that he gathered his family and possessions and without clarity on a destination left everything he was familiar with to follow God. Following God was more precious to him than any

¹² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 12:1–7.

¹³ Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*, Banner of Truth pp.219

comfortable life he had. Faith in God removed Abraham from all that was familiar to Him, because for Abraham it was better to be in a place God led him than to remain in the life he had.

Then in vs.9 we are told Abraham lives in the land of promise, but not like one who possesses the land, but lives in a foreign land in a temporary dwelling. We are told that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob live in the land they were promised to possess, but they are living in tents. Don't miss that significance...the author says they set up tents in a land God had promised them and lived there not as permanent residents. Abraham would live out his days not as a possessor of the land, but as a temporary resident moving from place to place within the land of Canaan.

Does this nullify the promise God made to him, or does it mean that God didn't keep his end of the bargain to Abraham, not at all. Instead the author of Hebrews shows that God continued to shape Abraham's faith as he dwelled in the land because Abraham was looking for something greater than a place to set up his tent, he was looking for a city.

Look at how the author displays the temporary with the eternal, that which fades gives way to that which lasts. The tent is a picture of the temporary the city is a picture of what lasts. But even we know that cities rise and fall throughout the ages. When the author says Abraham was looking for a city with foundations, whose designer and builder is God...he shows us that Abraham had more in mind than simply a place to lay his head. Abraham is looking for a home where God is...listen to how one commentator describes this, "*Abraham's hope focused on a city that would be unassailable because the living God both designed and built it... The heavenly sanctuary in which Jesus now ministers was "not made with hands", so it cannot be touched by the ravages of decay or destruction. Abraham's hope looked beyond Canaan and Jerusalem, which his offspring would eventually occupy, to the ultimate city of refuge—a "lasting city," still to come even for believers today—in a better, heavenly country.*"¹⁴

Abraham looked forward to the Lord's promise and God's Word defined his reality not his circumstances. He acted on God's word, he believe what God said and took God's promises with such certainty that he lived and died in faith. Believing God would keep His word. And we have in Romans 4:3 a statement not unlike what we read about Noah, Paul writes, "*³ For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."*¹⁵ Abraham was not righteous because He did what God said, but because he believed in God. His faith was in the one who made the promise to Him so he lived in light of God's promise regardless of what his circumstances looked like.

Abraham believed God and looked for a city that he couldn't see with his own eyes, and in a similar way we are still looking for that lasting city, we have not arrived home, but the promise of an eternal home with Jesus is no less true for us than it was for Abraham, and what's more is we have the guarantee of a place in heaven because all of the promises of God were confirmed for us in the Lord Jesus Christ, this we read in 2 Corinthians, "*²⁰ For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That*

¹⁴ Excerpt From ESV Expository Commentary: Hebrews–Revelation Crossway <https://itunes.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewBook?id=0> – This material may be protected by copyright.¹⁴

¹⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 4:3.

*is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.*¹⁶ Will we have a home in heaven yes because Christ has won it for us! The promises for us are sure in Him, so we like Abraham can live by faith in the future city we will live in with Abraham with foundations whose designer and builder is God.

So then, brother and sister in Christ, are you living for your eternal dwelling, or are you consumed by this life? Are you like Abraham willing to hear God's call and respond in faith? You may not be called to a foreign land, but you may be called to love one another, to forgive one another, to encourage one another, to proclaim hope to the lost, to share the gospel with your neighbors and friends, to serve this church in ways you never get recognized for? Are you willing to orient your entire life around the promises of God that this world is not your home, you are moving to a better city a permanent dwelling that is described like this by John,

21 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."¹⁷

Oh church this is our promised home, this is our promised city, this is the promised place for those who have fled the wrath of God by trusting in Jesus who bore the wrath we deserve in his death and rose from the grave securing our citizenship and home in this heavenly city and We will get there by God's grace, lets pray.

¹⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 2 Co 1:20.

¹⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Re 21:1–4.